

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on May 26, 2011.

Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall
Joe Cooper
Vincent DiBella

Merlin Ellis
Rebecca Nolan
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti
Pamela Williams

Members Absent:

Keiko Dilbeck
Dr. D. Kent Layton
Lars Nielson, Jr.

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein Rob Schultz
Tom Wilson Jeff Morris
Jean Kaminski

Guests Present:

MB Finnerty, Light Rail Public Art Administrator
Lisa Procknow, Community Outreach Coordinator
Julie Howard, Transit Coordinator
Mike James, Transit Services Director and his daughter Catherine James

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes from the March 24 meeting. There being none, Dr. Robbi D. Venditti made a motion, Vince DiBella seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of March 24. They will be posted on the City's website.

Public Comments: There was no public present.

Presentation and Information – Update on Mesa Light Rail Station Designs – MB Finnerty

MB Finnerty, Light Rail Public Art Administrator, and Lisa Procknow, Community Outreach Coordinator for Phoenix Metro, made a Power Point presentation of the Central Mesa Light Rail Transit Extension to the Board. The Power Point was a review of the Light Rail Station's project at 30% and included: the project schedule; design milestones; current activities; an outline of the process; the kit-of-parts; canopy concepts; the theme, architectural concept, and art concept for each station; and the next steps – See Exhibit A.

Ms. Procknow announced that there will be a public review of the project at 30%, on June 9, 6:00 p.m., at the East Valley Institute of Technology in the Health and Science Building. Everyone was encouraged to bring friends, neighbors, and family to the review. Staff from Metro Light Rail will present to the Board again when the 60% design review is completed.

Discuss and Take Action – Consider a Way to Recognize, and Make a Recommendation to Council to Comment, Mesa Encore Theatre on their 75th Anniversary – Douglas Brimhall

At the March meeting, Mesa Encore Theatre made a presentation to the Board on their organization, and, in doing so, announced that the upcoming season will be their 75th Anniversary; they are the longest continuously operating community theater in Arizona. The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board wanted to do something for the organization that would recognize this grand achievement.

A letter was drafted requesting that a proclamation be made at an upcoming Council meeting proclaiming "Mesa Encore Theatre Day in Mesa" at the beginning of their fall season and that a Museum and Cultural Advisory Board member be present to make a congratulatory statement on behalf of the Board, if a proclamation is granted. Board members present unanimously agreed to proceed with forwarding the letter to the Mayor and Council.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Jeffery Morris

- Rob Schultz introduced Arizona Museum for Youth's curator, Jeffery Morris, sitting in for Sunnee O'Rork who was attending The American Association of Museums conference in Texas.
- The Museum has hired a new Office Assistant, Gaylene Bekise. Gaylene received a BA in Business/Management from ASU and worked as a temp at the Museum for six months prior to being hired full time.
- Currently, the Museum has "Once Upon a Time: Fairytales, Frogs, and Fables" on exhibit, which has been well received. The exhibit will close this coming Sunday, May 29. Also "Play Ball" is back and will continue through August 7. The Museum has revamped the exhibit and added new activities and items since it was on exhibit last year.

- Upcoming is "Peanuts at Bat: The Life and Art of Charles M. Schultz." The exhibit goes from the development of Peanuts through to its TV days. The opening reception is on June 16 from 5 – 7 p.m. with the public opening beginning June 17, 10:00 a.m. The exhibit comes from the Charles M. Schultz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa, CA.
- Next fall, the Museum will have Bugs Bunny and friends in an exhibit called "The Art of the Warner Brothers Cartoons." Warner Brothers' cartoons started in the 1930's and were shown as shorts before a movie. Eventually the cartoons went to television. The exhibit will include the process of making an animation and other great activities.
- Another exhibit for next year is "Wing It," which ties into the Mesa Takes Flight project.
- Sunnee O'Rork will be on sabbatical from June 11 through July 8 to do a research project that will look at how the Museum can begin to travel shows that it designs. The goal is to get the Museum's and Mesa's name out in the field. Cindy Ornstein commented that it will also fill a void in the field for quality interactive traveling exhibits that deal with visual arts for youth and are of the size that the Museums builds. The belief is that it will be a sought after commodity and create recognition and revenue for the Museum.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Dr. Tom Wilson

- The Museum is having a strong spring/year – on pace for annual attendance and are at 136,500 with \$614,000 in revenue to-date. It is looking like this year will be one of the best years, with the exception of the blockbuster "Sue" exhibit in 2004.
- Mesa Grande has been acknowledged by the Arizona Historical Advisory Commission as an Arizona Centennial Project and the Museum is trying to get Mesa Grande opened to the public in time for the opening celebrations during the Centennial week. The architectural designs will go before the design review board next week for a small visitors center/gathering place. Staff will also be working on the interpretations for the trails that are already in place.
- The Museum received a call from a man who lives part-time in north Scottsdale who had a sculpture that he wanted to donate to the Museum. Staff went to see the sculpture and were pleasantly surprised to find a large bronze sculpture of a Hohokam man (see Exhibit B). The Museum anticipates putting the sculpture at the center of the visitor's center at Mesa Grande. The sculpture is a commissioned piece by Chicago artist Antonio Pazei.

Douglas Brimhall asked if a press release is sent out when something like acquiring the sculpture happens. Dr. Wilson replied that when there are significant news items or features, the Museum does issue a press release.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- The Mesa Arts Center Foundation has operated the MAC Store for approximately five years. The Store is in transition from being a retail store to an artist cooperative run by volunteers and artists. Planning for the transition has been going on for several months. There is a meeting this afternoon, May 26, with a large number of artists to discuss the transitioning process.
- Summer registration began several weeks ago and classes begin the first of June; there has been significant growth over last year; revenue is at \$75,000 this year compared to \$46,000 at this time last year, and registration is at 744 this year as compared to 500 at this time last year.
- Summer Arts Camp registration is going well. This year Mesa Arts Center (MAC) will partner with East Valley Children's Theater who will offer a summer drama camp at MAC campus.
- Mesa Contemporary Arts (MCA) is having an opening for two new exhibits on Friday, June 10. "Women's Work, Women's Wisdom," featuring six Arizona artists opens June 10 and will run through August 7, as well as "Picturing Maricopa 2010." Members' opening is from 6 – 7 p.m. with the public opening from 7 – 10 p.m. The opening will be in conjunction with downtown's June 2nd Friday.
- On Sunday, June 5 (Target 3 for Free), and also on 2nd Friday (June 10), there will be a "Chalk Walk," providing an opportunity for families and children to do sidewalk chalk drawings on the sidewalks between MCA and the Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) that will highlight "The Sea of Cortez" exhibit at AzMNH and the "Vermilion Remains" exhibit at MCA that touches on the biodiversity of the Sea of Cortez. Two artists have been commissioned to provide a "framework" for the sidewalk drawings. The public will be invited to draw sea creatures that they learned of from the exhibits, i.e., fish, turtles, etc. Following the June 5 free Sunday, the chalk walk will continue to fill in between the two Museums on June 10 (2nd Friday and opening at MCA). The artists will begin to create their own mural in specific locations – one in conjunction with the "Sea of Cortez" exhibit at AzMNH, and one in conjunction with the "Vermilion Remains" exhibit at MCA, and the community will continue the path that will connect the two Museums.

Director's Report – Cindy Ornstein

Mesa Arts Center (MAC) is experiencing a good year in attendance and revenue. Staff anticipates ending the year with 310,000 visitors, which is up approximately 30,000 over last year. We are below budget on total expenses and approximately a half-million over budget on revenue.

The 2011/12 Performing Live season has gone on-sale to Members and will go on-sale to the general public on June 26. The season is an extraordinary one featuring such performers as Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Vince Gill, Lily Tomlin, Bill Cosby and many other greats. The Classical Series will continue this year and two new series are being introduced: Off-Broadway Series and a Family Series. Ticket sales to-date (sales to members only) are significantly ahead of sales over the past three years.

The Mesa Arts and Entertainment Alliance, who conducted the capital campaign to raise the private funds to build the Mesa Arts Center, held their annual meeting. In addition to giving an update on the progress of some projects they allocated funds for previously, staff made recommendations for some smaller projects that were approved, and made an additional request for a new capital project that would cover the area on the north end of campus where the water pours out into the arroyo. The idea is to build an area that would be principally dedicated to visual arts demonstrations, and occasionally for performing artists. It would be a state-of-the-art installation equipped with everything a teacher or guest artist would need to conduct a workshop/demonstration, as well as being used for performing artists. The Alliance approved the project and it will be named the Alliance Visual Arts Demonstration Pavilion. A conceptual drawing was done by Jeremy Jones of DWL Architects who was involved in designing the Mesa Arts Center (see Exhibit D) and will be part of the design team for the Pavilion.

At the Council Study Session this morning, Ms. Ornstein shared a Power Point on a proposal she developed for a "Creative Economy Fund" (see exhibit C), and also shared it with the Board. The Power Point details the *Current support given to Mesa Organizations (not City-owned); Additional Need/Opportunity; **Goals of the fund; ***the proposal; ****criteria to apply (for new rental users as well as current rental users); and the next steps.

***Current support** consists of the Arts and Culture Department providing \$15,000 of in-kind support to the Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Founding Resident Companies (there are six). The \$15,000 currently allocated is divided among Founding Resident Companies based on the percentage of total rental use of the facilities. Support is provided in the form of rent reduction or marketing assistance.

****Goals:** enables organizations who do not currently use the MAC theaters, lecture hall, Studios, or Shadow Walk to apply for reduced rental fees; encourage cultural organizations to increase their engagement/education activities and develop new audiences; incentivize longer-term relationship building where possible, rather than one-time use of the facility; bring new programs and activities to the Mesa community; and generate new earned revenue as MAC provides a subsidized rental fee.

*****The proposal:** provide in-kind support, in the form of rent reduction, to both new rental users and the Founding Resident Companies (FRC); there would be a competitive process administered by MAC staff with input from the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board; the fund would have \$25,000 of in-kind rental credit for use of the theaters, Studios, or public spaces at MAC; and money would be split between FRC's and current non-users/current rental users who are not FRC's. The split amount for distribution: \$10,000 for the FRC's and \$15,000 for others.

******Criteria for new rental users:** Must be a non-profit cultural organization or non-profit presenting programs that incorporate arts/culture. Organizations would receive extra points if it is a multi-use or multi-day project/presentation and if they are incorporating education or community engagement.

For current rental users (both FRC's and others): Must expand an existing program or add program to deepen the audience's educational experience; increase active participation or engagement of audiences; or develop new audiences.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, stated that he was pleased that the Board would play a role in this proposal as the Board's duties have been cut back greatly since Arts and Cultural Grants are no longer given and Public Art is no longer funded. Ms. Ornstein responded that the Mayor, Council, and City Manager were pleased with the proposal. It is anticipated that the program would also support the downtown merchants and restaurants as more programming is brought to Mesa.

Ms. Ornstein is working on the application guidelines, and once completed, she will share with the Board via e-mail, which all agreed was an efficient method for providing input.

Senior staff, with input from Department staff, has been working on a strategic positioning document that outlines vision, mission, goals, objectives, and key strategies for the Arts and Culture Department. Senior staff will meet again next week to update the draft document and make sure that staff's input is incorporated and decide what the next steps will be. Each organization has their own Strategic Plan, and the intent of this document is to provide an umbrella outlining the Department's shared goals and strategies. The Department is going to create a web page on the City of Mesa's website posting the strategic positioning document. The ultimate goal is to populate it so that the overarching strategies will have the

tactics that are individual to each organization with live links to that organization's website that shows how we are implementing the strategies. Once finalized, Ms. Ornstein will share the document with the Board. Senior staff is also working on a Department logo that incorporates the three facilities with a tag line that reads "Mesa Arts and Culture – Inspiring Creativity and Discovery."

There is an Arizona-wide Science and Technology Festival being coordinated by Jeremy Babendure of ASU. The organization is coordinating with a large group of partners and the Department of Arts and Culture is one of them. The Festival committee has identified a handful of significant events that they want to incorporate with their festival. The Mesa Takes Flight Project and Centennial Festival at Mesa Arts Center in February 2012 is one of those events.

Staff is looking at continuing our partnership with the Science and Technology community exploring other programming/activities that we can collaborate on. One thought is to explore the notion of the "art of science and the science of art."

Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only

Rebecca Nolan announced that her term is expiring at the end of June and she has told the Mayor that she will not be serving a second term. She will be advocating for arts education at her son's school as PTO President for a couple of years. She did express that she would love to come back to the Board at another time.

Dr. Robbi D. Venditti shared that she attended the Motown performance in March at MAC; she was disappointed in the experience. Cindy Ornstein, chair, explained that the show was a rental and **not** presented by Mesa Arts Center; however, refunds were issued to dissatisfied customers.

Rebecca Nolan reported that she attended "Spamalot" and was delighted. She further said that there wasn't a bad seat in the theater and there was thunderous applause.

Cindy Ornstein reported that she attended, along with 125 others, an Arizona Town Hall meeting that focused on arts and culture in Tucson. A report was produced before the meeting, and attendees were sent a document with the Town Hall recommendations following the meeting. Ms. Ornstein has an essay on her move to Arizona within the report that she was asked to write along with several others that included Dr. Tom Wilson and Mandy Buscas. Jean Kaminski was asked to forward the report and recommendations to the Board.

Merlin Ellis asked how far along the design for the Alliance Pavilion was. Ms. Ornstein said that the Alliance has just approved the project and she anticipates it will be completed by the end of the next fiscal year. She further stated that she would check with Randy Vogel who will be forming a design committee, and possibly, since there are several architects on the Board, he would like to have a Board member or two as part of that committee.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department